

A N
ESSAY
UPON
Dancing

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LETTER to WILLIAM MACHRIE,
Professor of Both-Swords, in the
City of Edinburgh.

BY *K. MacLain*
WILLIAM MCCLAIN,
Professor of Capering, and Master
of the Revells, at Edinburgh,
in North-Britain.

*Nunc Pede libero
Pulsanda Tellus. Hor.*

Printed in the Year, M D C C X I.

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UPON

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LETTER TO THE
TOWNSHIP OF B...



WILLIAM M. ...
of the Revell ...
in North ...

Printed by ...
London.

Printed in the Year, M D C C X I.

MOST WORTHY DOCTOR

I Have read your Essay upon *Duelling*, with a great deal of satisfaction: The Honour that you have gained by it, hath encouraged me to put Pen to Paper upon the Noble Art of Dancing: Beside we are sure now to live in the Mouth of Fame, since our Worthy Friend Doctor George Mackenzie Records with Honour Scots Authors and their Writings.

How Noble will it be to see shining in that worthy Author's Books, the Names of Mr. James Webster, Mr. William Machrie, Mr. Robert Hephunn, and the Immortal Mr. William Metain.

Yet sure I am, I shall be preferred to you, because I am more of the Philosopher, and you more of the Warrior. Doctor Mackenzie is of Cicero's Mind,

Cedent arma Togæ. What is a Soldier? nay a General? but a Porter and a Butcher. It requires no Head to cheat and Defeat an Enemy; but a great deal, to Compendize *Aristotle's* Philosophy, and to give an Abstract of all the Antient Heresies: Your Essay will to after Ages be Noted as one of the most dangerous Heresies ever was broched in the World, when the Doctor shall Rank me with *Aristotle*. But now to come to my Essay.

Dancing or Capering is nothing but using the Feet gently to the Time of Musick, and answering exactly the Fiddles, it Rejoices the Spirit, brings good Company together, rubs off all Harshness from Mens Humours, and gives a great deal of Activity to their Bodies and Souls. By *Græcian* Writers the Pedigree of it is derived from Heaven, the Stars in their Motion seem to keep a Harmonical Order, and to Imitate a kind of Dancing Motion, which they began so soon as

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the World was Created: By the help
of this, *Bacchus* is said to have Ci-
vilized the *Indians* and *Lydians*, who
afterwards made Use of it, in
their Religious Rites. The Goddess
Rhea, commanded the *Corribants* in *Phry-
gia*, and the *Curetes* in *Crete*, to Ex-
ercise this Noble Art. In *Delos* there
was no Sacred Ceremony perform'd
without Dancing. The *Brahmans* also
among the *Indians*, Morning and Even-
ing, worshiped the Beams of the Sun,
dancing all the time. And likewise the
Aethiopians, *Thracians*, and *Scythians*, per-
form their Religious Ceremonies danc-
ing, which Order was instituted by *Or-
pheus* and *Museus*. Among the *Romans*,
the *Salian* Priests Danc'd in Honour of
Mars. The *Lacedomians*, the Bravest
People of *Greece*, learned the Custom
of Dancing in all their Feasts and pub-
lick Ceremonies, from *Castor* and *Pol-
lux*. And in *Theffaly*, Dancing was had
in such Veneration, that the Princes
of the Country were Honoured with
the

the Title of Foremost Dancers. *Socrates* also, who by the Oracle it self was Judged the wisest Man, then Living in the World, Learn'd to Dance, when he was far stricken in Years, and highly Extolled that Noble Art, reckoning it among the most Serious parts of Education, Deserving the Esteem of both Men and Gods. *Garbi-nus* and *Marcus Celius*, Men in Consular Dignity at Rome, are Commended in History for fine Dancers. As also *Lucius Morena*. And that worthy Lady *Sempronia*; nay the Great Emperor *Augustus*, likewise *Nero*, were fond of Capering. And we find in Sacred History, that King *David* danc'd before the LORD, and his Ark. And Moderns have so far approved of the Ancients Opinion of Dancing, that now there is no Gentleman but Learns it; and no wonder, for to it, all Arts and Sciences owe their beginning. Dancing Introduced Musick, which the *Grecians* Valued so much, that *Aristoxenus*, whose

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whose Writings *Boetius*, hath translated into *Latine*, calls it the Soul of Man. *Plato* says in his first Book of Law, that none can understand Musick, without the Knowledge of all the other Sciences: So usefull is it, that History observes certain Tunes had so great Charms, that they incited the *Lacedemonians* and *Cretans* to War. *Timotheus* by Musick incited *Alexander* to Arms, and *Boethius* relates that a Tune upon an Instrument, mov'd *Tauroninitianus* to Burn a House, wherea certain *Curtezan* lay conceal'd. Musick can keep People's Chast, *Agamemnon* when he was to go to the *Trojan* War, left a Musician behind him to preserve the Chastity of his Wife *Clitemnestra*, by his grave Spondaick Songs; and untill he was kill'd, it was impossible for *Egythus* to obtain his Desires of her. By Musick, Diseases may be Cur'd, for Diseases being in the Blood, a Fine Sound can move, that it can change the very

By Motion and Circulation of the
 Heart relates, that *Alcimed* and
Ulysses were mighty fond of the Harp.
 And *Virgil* says the same of *Jason*, *Dido*
 and *Aeneas*; and *Argo* with his hundred
 Eyes, was charmd asleep by the Sound
 of one Single Pipe. And GOD Him-
 self, to move the Affections, ordained
 Musick in the Jewish Church; and St.
Ambrose delighted so much in it, that
 he instituted the use of Singing and
 Playing in Christian Churches: And
 the Saints in Glory, what do they in
 Heaven but Sing and Praise? Poetry
 is but a sort of Musick. Tragedies
 and Comedies, what are they but
 Stage-dancing, whereby it is designed,
 that Things conceived in the Mind,
 shou'd be demonstrated by the Ge-
 stures of the Body; and the Manners
 and Affections so clearly represented,
 that By-standers may understand the
 Player by the Motion of his Body, tho'
 he say not a word.

By Different Gestures of the Body,
 we

we Display out several Passions, by a Merry Caper, a Passionate Stamp, a Desperate Screwing of the Body, and a Languishing Folding of the Arms, and what is every one of these Motions but as many Species of Dancing? Nay Dancing has come to such Perfection that it been Expressive, if I may say so, for I'll prove it of a long Story, and the Person that was Master of it, cou'd himself alone, Act a Farce most Lively tho' there were Fourty Persons to be Represented in the Drama.

Mimes and *Pantomines* did all by Gesture, and the Action of Hands, Legs and Feet, without making use of the Tongue in any Sentiments or Sounds, which made *Demetrius* the Cynick Philosopher Cry out to one of them in the Middle of his Performance, I hear, my Friend, what you act, nor do I only see them, but methinks you speak with your hands. This same *Pantomine*, who liv'd in the time of *Nero*, was seen by a
Bar-

Barbarian Prince, who came from *Pontus* to *Rome*, and Personated so lively, that the Prince tho' he knew nothing of what was Sung, being half a *Gracian*, understood all; being afterwards to return to his Country, and promis'd by *Nero* any thing he should ask, he desired the *Dancer*: *Nero* thinking him an Useless Compliment, ask'd the Reason of his Demand, the Prince answered, That his Neighbour Barbarians were of different Languages, and that it was not easie to find Interpreters for them; and that this Fellow, as often as he had need, would expound to him by his Gestures,

Dancing was so much esteem'd in *Greece*, that *Socrates* being reflected upon, for frequenting too much the *Egyptian* Performances of that kind, Reply'd, That Dancing contained all Musical Exercises.

To Stage-Dancers *Cicero* owed his Oratory, especially *Roscus*, who was a great Comerad of *Sylla* the

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Dictator, and since what is Represented on the Stage is but the Picture of Humane Actions, the Composers must understand all sort of Learning and the Manners of the Age; So that the best Philosopher, Lawyer, Divine, Historian, or Warriour, must all yeild to a Compleat Dancing-Master. And for you, most Noble Doctor, you must cast your Cap to me; Not only as Master of the Revells, who is still your Superior Officer, but because all your Art owes its beginning to Dancing.

We never hear of any Persons of Note in all Antiquity, that were ever Fencing Masters or Fencers, and the beginning of Fencing was among the *Gladiators*, who were a pack of Slaves, Maintained by the Publick, for the People's Diversion to Kill one another in a Gladiatory Dance; However you have other things than your Employment of Fencing to Recommend you for, you have improven the Noble Art of Cock-

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Cock Fighting, to a vast degree; and
you are Noted all over Britain for your
Skill in Riding the Great Horse; so
very usefull in War: Beside your
Knowledge in Mathematicks, and all
Polite Learning, makes you acceptable
to all Learn'd Men. But since my creep-
ing Pen is noways fit, to record your
Praises. I shall leave it to the foresaid
Scots Historian, who I hope will do
both of us Justice. In the mean time,
I beg Leave to Sign my self what in all
Reality I am,

Sir,

Your most Humble
and
Obedient Servant,

William M'laine.

P. S.

Since the writing of this, I have seen an Advertisement, that you have inserted in the *Courant*, where you very laboriously display that excellent Christian Virtue, call'd *Self-denyal*; in disclaiming the Worthiest Piece you ever wrote, *viz. The Essay upon Duelling*, mention'd in my Letter: tho' some Malicious People wou'd insinuate, that its design'd to make it sell the better: the rather, because you borrowed a Minister's Name to one of their Writings, against a Brother of the Trade in *Aberdeen*. But the Learn'd, (however it be) are very sensible, that you are sufficiently capacitate for such a Performance; and such as are acquainted with your Circumstances, know, that you want not Money. I therefore, as your Comerade, think my self oblig'd to Con-
 radict you, so far, as to tell your self, and the World, that you are unquestionably the Author of that Elaborate Piece.

Since the writing of this, I have seen
Advertisement, that you have in-
serted in the Courant, where you very
generously display that excellent Chris-
tian Virtue, call'd Self-denial; in dis-
tressing the Wretched Poor, and ever

**Nota, In the thirteen Page, P.
Line 12. for their Writings, read**

our People would illustrate, that is
ought to make it all the better: the
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ster's Name to one of your Writings,
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Advertisement (But the Bishop's Name is be-
ing very sensible, that you are in the
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